

Dear Friend,

According to the California Breast Cancer Research Program, approximately every two hours a California woman dies of breast cancer. Nearly 200,000 women throughout the state are living with the disease, and today a woman has a one in eight chance of developing breast cancer during her life time.

Early detection is the best defense against breast cancer.

Women should, at the age of 20, begin clinical breast examinations by a health-care provider every three years and, starting at the age of 40, annual mammograms and clinical breast examinations.

Currently in California, funding for breast cancer treatment is provided for individuals who do not qualify for Medi-Cal, or who do not have health insurance. The state budget makes funds available to provide breast cancer treatment to those who can't afford essential services.

I encourage you to monitor your health and take proactive steps.

Sincerely,



JOAN BUCHANAN

Assemblymember,
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Compliments of

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Breast Cancer

*Detection needs
to be followed by
effective treatment
in order to save
lives.*

Basic Facts About Breast Cancer

Breast cancer ranks second among cancer deaths in women – only lung cancer accounts for more deaths. It is the most common invasive cancer among women, accounting for nearly one out of three cancers diagnosed in women in California.

Approximately 80 percent of women who develop breast cancer have no family history of the disease. All women are at risk and there are no known causes or cures for breast cancer. More often than not, breast lumps are not cancerous, but all lumps should be examined by a health-care professional.

Early detection is the best way to beat breast cancer. Mammography and clinical breast examinations have been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality. A little over half of the women age 40 and older in California have had a mammogram within the last year.

Most women who found breast cancer in its early stages and received treatment are alive and well five years later.

Myths and Facts about the Risk of Developing Breast Cancer

Myth: **Breast cancer is preventable.**

Fact: There is no known way to prevent breast cancer and the cause of the disease has not been determined. Early detection followed by prompt treatment offers the best chance for surviving breast cancer.

Myth: **Only women get breast cancer.**

Fact: Breast cancer is rare in men, but it does occur in roughly 1,000 men each year. In normal men, small rudiments of breast ducts may be found in the center of the breast, beneath the areola and nipple. The vast majority of breast cancers in men, therefore, arise in this area, rather than in the outer quadrants so commonly affected in women.

Myth: **Only women with known “risk factors” get breast cancer.**

Fact: More than 80 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer have no identifiable “risk factors.” All women are at risk and risk increases with age.

Myth: **If a mammogram finds something, it is too late to do anything.**

Fact: When breast cancer is found early, your chances of survival are 96%! This means that 96 out of 100 women survive for 5 or more years. There are many options for treatment when breast cancer is found early.

Myth: **Breast cancer is contagious.**

Fact: Cancer is not a communicable disease. It results from uncontrolled growth of cells in a person’s own body. These changes cannot affect other people’s cells.

Myth: **Small-breasted women cannot get breast cancer.**

Fact: The amount of breast tissue a woman has does not affect her risk of developing breast cancer.

Myth: **Breast feeding causes or protects against breast cancer.**

Fact: No studies have shown that breast feeding causes breast cancer. Some studies have suggested that breast feeding may reduce a woman’s risk of developing the disease. However, studies are still ongoing on this topic. A woman who breast feeds her children can still get breast cancer.

Early Detection and Mammography

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray picture of your breast. A doctor, known as a radiologist, looks at the pictures taken of your breasts. The radiologist makes a report of what he/she finds and sends the report to your regular doctor.

Why should I have a mammogram?

A mammogram can find breast irregularities that are too small for you, your doctor, or your nurse to feel. The American Cancer Society recommends that all women age 40 and older have a mammogram every year. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of their regular health exam, preferably every three years. Women who are at high risk of breast cancer should seek expert medical advice about whether to begin mammography before age 40.

What is meant by high and average risk for breast cancer?

Most women are considered to be at average risk for breast cancer. The risk of breast cancer increases with age. There are a number of risk factors that cause a woman to be at high risk for breast cancer, and women should consult a health professional to determine their risk level. Some examples of risk factors are:

- Having a first child after age 30
- Other breast disease
- Family history of breast cancer

Where can I get a mammogram?

- Ask your doctor or nurse.
- Ask your local health department or clinic.
- Call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

Important Resources

State of California Cancer Detection Programs: Every Woman Counts
Offers **FREE** breast exams and mammograms to qualified women age 40 and older.

1-800-511-2300

www.dhs.ca.gov/cancerdetection/breastcancer/breastcancer.htm

American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345

(1-800-227-2345)

www.cancer.org

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

1-800-I’M-AWARE®

(1-800-462-9273)

www.komen.org

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

1-800-4-CANCER

(1-800-422-6237)

www.cancer.gov/cancer_information

National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organization (NABCO)

www.nabco.org

